

Unit 3 "Blessed Are You, O Lord, Teach Us Your Commandments " Lesson 9

God's Chosen People

Objective: Students will be able to 1) recite the first three commandments and 2) explain how Jesus taught us to keep these commandments through positive acts of love.

For the Catechist

The Ten Commandments are the cornerstone of God's covenant with His people. However, there is much more to what transpired at the making of the covenant, and there are many more rules. (See Exodus 20-23.)

The commandments are the heart or summation of Israel's obligations under the covenant. In these lessons the commandments are identified in relational rather than legal terms. Like eating the forbidden fruit, violating these commandments does not call down punishment as much as it inevitably damages the relationship established with God. This is why the Law could be perceived as life-giving by the Jews.

The Ten Commandments follow the typical covenant form. First, the relationship of the weaker to the greater is defined. So, in the first three commandments we see the Israelites being told where they stand in relationship to God: "You shall not have any other gods." In the final seven we see the rules that must determine their daily activities. To keep God's protection, the Israelites agreed to follow the Ten Commandments. The covenant is ratified by a sacrifice and the sprinkling of blood. (See Exodus 24:8). This is a foreshadowing of the New Covenant in Jesus Christ ratified by His sacrifice on the cross.

As Christians we see the Ten Commandments from the eyes of Moses and the Israelites and from the eyes of Jesus, the New Covenant, Who stated the commandments in positive terms: "You shall love the Lord your God with your whole heart, with your whole soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second is like it: you shall love your neighbor as yourself. The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments" (Mt 22:37-40). As you discuss the commandments with the children, focus on the positive ways we can follow God's law, explaining that this is in accordance with the interpretation of Christ.

Lesson Plan Overview

Opening: "We Praise You"

Introduction: Discussion of honoring God
Need: phrases from the opening prayer (worksheet at the end of this lesson)

Read Text Aloud: Have the students volunteer to read the text aloud or have the students read sections silently.

Activity Tracks:

Choose a basic, group, or craft activity (detailed on the pages that follow) to reinforce the lesson.

- *Basic:* We Love God
- *Group:* Ten Commandments Poster
- *Craft:* Commandments 1-3

Closing: "I Love You, Lord"
(Use your jurisdiction's translation found at the end of this lesson.)

Icon Packets:

Come Bless the Lord:
Christ the Pantocrator
Christ the Teacher
The Icon of Mid-Pentecost

Teaching Pics

Teaching the Commandments

Grade 4 marks the second major presentation of the Ten Commandments in the *God With Us* series. In the second grade text, *God Gives Life*, lessons 19, 20 and 21 are devoted to the Ten Commandments where they are presented as "God's rules." The Greatest Commandment is presented there as well and is described as helping to explain the Ten Commandments.

In addition, earlier grades include individual aspects of the Commandments. The pre-school text, *Glory to God*, and the Kindergarten text, *God Is with Us*, focus on the fourth commandment, which is described as "A long time ago God said, 'Honor your father and mother.'" In the first grade text, *God Is Love*, the giving of the commandments is told in recounting the story of the Exodus, without going into them in detail.

One new focus in Grade 4 is the covenant. The commandments represent what the Israelites are to do if they are to live as God's people. A second emphasis added this year explores them in the context of the Greatest Commandment. If the commandments are directives to love, then they must be seen positively. Viewed in this way, the commandments are invitations to uphold life, the family, other's self-worth, and an alternative to the materialistic world-view that fosters covetousness. The commandments are not simply a matter of "don'ts" but of "do's."

Catechists may remember learning the Ten Commandments, probably by rote, as the believer's chief principles for living. The approach here, rather, reflects the New Testament accent on love as the primary or king of the commandments (see James 2:8). To be true to this approach, we must not only teach the commandments as a list of "don'ts" but as the first steps in keeping the commandment to love.

The table of the Ten Commandments below is designed to help the catechist understand the basic meaning of each commandment and its consequences for Christians. It is not necessary to present this material to the students unless they raise the topics. Rather the stress in this lesson and the next should be on keeping the commandments through positive acts of love,

Original Meaning

Consequences

First

A - At this time in history, it was common for people to worship many gods and goddesses. The Israelites were often drawn to worship the gods of neighboring people. The Israelites were called to believe only in the one God who saved them from slavery in Egypt.

A - Just as the Israelites did, we worship only God. Jesus revealed that God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the Trinity. For Christians, the first commandment is a call to believe in God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Our Church gives us many prayers and songs to honor God, the Holy Trinity. One of them is the Nicene Creed. It begins with "I believe in one God..." Another prayer that honors God begins "Glory be to the Father..." When we say these prayers we are worshipping God. We are called to see our relationship with God as the most important aspect of our lives. If we make our careers, our country, even our family or the Church, more important than God, we have turned them into false gods.

Original Meaning

Consequences

First

B - Ancient peoples also made idols, figures or images representing a god or goddess. Israelites tried to represent God with a golden calf but were forbidden to do so. This prohibition of worshiping graven (carved) images is part of the first commandment in some listings; in others it is a separate commandment.

B - The 8th-century iconoclasts and some Protestants today consider icons as prohibited by this commandment. The Church points to the incarnation of Christ as the basis for its theology of icons. Because the Son of God became visible and palpable in His incarnation, we can and should depict Him in icons. The Tradition still does not permit the worship of icons but encourages us to venerate them. We have "false gods" today. When we put money or power before God, we create an idol—a "false god."

Second

In this commandment God told the Israelites that His name should be used only with reverence. To use His name casually or without reverence is to disrespect God who loves us so much. This is what in vain means: to say God's name disrespectfully, without reverence.

Jesus revealed to us that God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. As Christians we are called to respect the name of the Trinity as we respect the name of God. This is why we make the sign of the cross and bow our heads whenever we say or hear "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." Earlier this year we learned that God's Son took the name Jesus, meaning Savior. We respect the name of Jesus in the same way that we respect the name of God.

Third

The Israelites were called to observe the Sabbath (Saturday, the seventh day of the week). God's people were to remember His goodness in creation by resting on the seventh day as He did (Gen 2:3). This day without work was also to remind them that they were no longer slaves, thanks to the God who saved them.

As Christians we keep Sunday as the Lord's Day because it was the day on which Jesus rose from the dead. We remember that God has given us eternal life and wants us to live forever with Him. The best way to keep the Lord's Day holy is by participating in the Divine Liturgy and receiving Holy Communion.

The following questions are also part of lesson 10 in the student book:

(These questions can be included during the discussion of the lesson, during a review of the lesson, or during the introduction of any future lessons.)

The First Commandment

Have you learned to say the Creed? How do you show that you believe the words that you are saying?

Do you care whether you understand what the Church tells us about God?

How would you explain our faith to a friend or classmate who is not a Christian?

What shows that God is more important in your life than TV, video games, toys or playing with friends?

If you play every day or watch TV every day but don't pray every day, are you keeping the first commandment? Why not?

The Second Commandment

What can you do to show that you honor God? Some people always keep a lamp burning before their icons to honor God.

What are some ways we can take care of our church building and its property as our way of honoring God?

The Third Commandment

Do you love to worship God? What shows that you do? Do you pray and sing with everyone?

If a person looks for excuses to skip attending the Liturgy, is he or she keeping this commandment?

Is someone who comes to church but makes noise and distracts others keeping this commandment? How should we behave in church?

How can you make Sunday special for others?

Background Reading

(Direct quotations from the sources noted)

The Law in the Life of the Israelites

With the giving of the Law, the Commandments, the demand of faith was extended to the entire life of the chosen people. The Law became a means for the people of Israel to enter into a dedicated and holy life, to live in the role of the people of God and to abandon themselves to His guidance.

The Law for the Israelites was their life. It was given for their sanctification, Psalm 118/119, the longest psalm, is a meditation on the Law:

"How I love your law, O Lord!
It is my meditation all the day." (verse 97)
"Wonderful are your decrees;
Therefore I observe them." (verse 129)

In speaking of the joy to be found in keeping the Law, the psalm is not advocating legalism for its own sake, but a love and desire to do God's will as expressed through the Law. For the Israelites, the Law was an expression of God's revelation of Himself and His will for us.

(adapted from Intro, to Unit III, *Promise*, 1978 edition)

The Commandments and Christian Life

"The New Testament, especially the Gospels and Epistles, gives us an even deeper understanding of what 'keeping the commandments' is supposed to mean. When we must judge the morality of acts, as Eastern Christians we turn to the Lord Jesus' central teaching on the Kingdom of God. 'Seek first His Kingdom and its righteousness and all these things will be yours as well' (Matthew 6:33). Would any proposed act reflect the Kingdom and its values or not? To the extent that it reflects and incarnates the Kingdom, it is moral; and the highest of such acts are the Beatitudes. To the extent that an action does not manifest the Kingdom and its values, it is a distortion and misuse of a believer's energies. It is never enough just to consult just what 'the Law' says. We do not relate to a law code in our Christian life; we have a personal relationship with God in the context of the Christian community, and it is in terms of those relationships that morality is determined" (*LLIII* 61).

The Lesson Plan

Opening

Today we will pray words we sing during the Divine Liturgy. [Give out the prayer "We Praise You" found at the end of this lesson.] Let's pray Does anyone know when we pray these words? (When the priest raises the Holy Gifts and offers them to God.)

Introduction

For a few weeks we have been learning about the way God wants us to live. God as our Father wants what is best for us. Our parents, also, want what is best for us because they love us very much. We show our love for them by listening to them and following what they ask. Let's think of some rules our parents want us to follow because they want what is best for us. (Don't go with strangers, be home at certain times, do our homework) We follow our parents rules because we want to show our parents we love them.

Last week we learned about the Israelites who wanted to show God how much they loved Him. At the end of the lesson we read the Ten Commandments. To whom were they given? (Moses and the Israelites) Why were they willing to follow the Ten Commandments? (They loved God and wanted to show Him how much they loved Him.) Should we be willing to follow the Ten Commandments? (Yes) Why? (We love God very much also.)

Today I have a puzzle for us to put together. I have the words from the prayer we just said, but they are not in the right order. [Give out the words from the worksheet.] Let's gather together and put the words in the light order. [This activity depends on the number of students and the space in your room.] What is the pattern we see in this prayer? (Each sentence begins with we.) Who is the "we"? (All of us in church, all Christians, all baptized people) After the we in each line, we state how we are honoring and worshiping God. What are the words from the prayer that say that? (Praise, bless, thank, and pray)

Today's lesson will show us how the first three commandments tell us how to honor, worship, and love God. Let's turn to our lesson and also learn how Jesus tells us in the New Testament how we are to love God.

9

Love of God



God's plan for the Israelites was greater than anything they could have imagined. God delivered them from slavery and promised to make them His chosen people. God gave them a further sign of His love: He made a covenant with them. This is what He said to Moses:

"Here, then," said the Lord, "is the covenant I will make: before the eyes of all your people I will work such marvels as have never been wrought in any nation anywhere on earth, so that this people among whom you live may see how inspiring are the deeds which I, the Lord, will do at your side. But you, on your part, must keep the commandments I am giving you today." (Exodus 34:10-12)

God told the Israelites what He would do for them. The first three commandments spelled out what the people were to do for Him. The first three commandments speak about how people are to relate to God.

1. I am the Lord your God; you shall not have strange gods before Me.
2. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.
3. Remember to keep holy the Lord's Day.

46 God With Us Grade 4 Unit 3: Blessed Are You, O Lord, Teach Us Your Commandments

Reading of Text

As the children read aloud, help them interact with the text using the comments or questions below which are keyed to the text phrases (in bold type).

Let's read the title of this unit, "Blessed Are You, O Lord, Teach Us Your Commandments."

Does anyone remember our praying those words? We said them for our opening prayer a few weeks ago [lessons 6 and 8], What are we asking God to teach us? (To follow what He says is right) Commandment, precept, and statute mean the same. All these words are identifying the instructions that God gives us for our life. [In the Old Testament are many words that translate the Hebrew words for the word instruction; commandment, precept, and statute are only three of them.]

"... I am giving you today." (Exodus 34:10-11)

What was God's plan for the Israelites? What was God's plan for the Israelites? (He called them to be His people; He made a covenant with them; He gave them the Ten Commandments.) What did God ask in return? (They keep the Ten Commandments)



Hundreds of years after God gave these commandments, someone asked Jesus, "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?" (Matthew 22:36) Read Jesus' answer in the Gospel of Matthew 22:37-40. Write the most important part of His answer, verse 40, below:

The whole law

Jesus' answer means that all the commandments are about love. If a person really loves God, he or she will keep all the commandments.

The First Commandment

"I am the Lord your God; you shall not have strange gods before Me."

This commandment tells us not to put anyone or anything before God in our lives. Jesus said that the commandments are about love. To keep the first commandment Jesus' way, we should love God more than anyone or anything else.

If we love someone, we want to spend time with them and do things for them. How can we spend time with God? What can we do for God to show that we love Him?

The Second Commandment

"You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain."

This commandment means that God's name should be used only with reverence. To use His name without reverence is to disrespect God Who loves us so much. This is what in vain means: to say God's name disrespectfully, without reverence.

Jesus revealed to us that God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. As Christians we are called to respect the name of the Trinity as we respect the name of God. Earlier this year we learned that God's Son took the name Jesus, meaning Savior. We respect the name of Jesus in the same way that we respect the name of God. To respect the name is to respect the person.

47

... he or she will keep the commandments.

What do the first three commandments tell us about? (What we are to do for God) Why should we keep the commandments? (To show our love for God)

What can we do for God to show that we love Him?

What are some strange gods? (The sun, stars, moon) What are some other things we think are more important than God? (Possessions, work, entertainment) How can we spend time with God? (Praying, being in church) How can we show our love for Him? (Be nice to other people, go to church, pray, read the Bible.)

To respect the name is to respect the person.

What does in vain mean? (To say God's name disrespectfully, without reverence) When are the only times we should say God and Jesus Christ? (When we are praying or talking reverently about God.) Why? (Because we honor the person and the name)

..to show that we love to honor the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit?

(We begin our prayers by making the sign of the cross and saying, "In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit?")

... to show your love for God?

(We can show our love by venerating icons, by having icons in our house, by wearing a cross, by being nice to everyone and everything God created.) Now let's make a list of other things people do on the Lord's Day. (Shop, work, mow the lawn, wash clothes) What does God want us to do on His day? (Keep His day holy; honor and worship Him; rest and pray) Is it hard to keep the Lord's day holy? (Probably yes) Why? (There are so many other things to do and not enough time to do them.) We must always remember to do what God asks first.

Words to Remember: [Read the words together, and use them to introduce, summarize, and/or review the lesson.]

Review: Let's read the first three commandments aloud.

Activity Tracks

Basic: We Love God

[This worksheet is in the student text.]

Today we learned how much we are to love God. Let's use the code at the top of the page to write a scriptural passage in which Jesus tells us how we are to love God. [Have the students list the alphabet and write the appropriate number based on the clue. Then have them decipher the message.] Now let's do the second part of this activity

To keep the second commandment Jesus' way is to show that we love the name of God. This is why we make the sign of the cross and bow our heads whenever we say or hear the names "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." What other things can we do to show that we love to honor the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit?

The Third Commandment
"Remember to keep holy the Lord's Day."

In the third commandment God told the Israelites to keep one day each week as holy. The Israelites kept the Sabbath (Saturday, the seventh day of the week) as their holy day to remember how God created all things.

As Christians we keep Sunday as the Lord's Day because it was the day on which Jesus rose from the dead. We show our love for God who gave us eternal life and wants us to live forever with Him.

To keep the third commandment Jesus' way is to show that we love to keep the Lord's Day. We keep the Lord's Day holy by joining in the Divine Liturgy. When we pay attention and join in singing the hymns and when we help to serve at the altar or sing in the choir, we show that we love to keep the Lord's Day.

Jesus told us that worshipping God, honoring His name and keeping His day holy are all ways of loving God. What other ways can you think of to show your love for God?



Words to Remember:
Statutes or Precepts: Other words for commandments.
In vain: Without reverence. When we say God's name in vain, we are insulting God.
Reverence: A feeling of love, respect, and awe.
Sabbath: The Hebrew name for Saturday, the seventh day of the week. The Israelites kept the Sabbath as their holy day.

48

We Love God

Find the message that is hidden in this code

Clue: Z - 1 Y - 2 X - 3

YOU SHALL LOVE THE
 2 12 6 8 19 26 15 15 15 12 5 22 7 19 22

LORD YOUR GOD
 15 12 9 23 2 12 6 9 20 12 23

WITH ALL YOUR HEART
 4 18 7 19 26 15 15 2 12 6 9 19 22 26 9 7

WITH ALL YOUR SOUL
 4 18 7 19 26 15 15 2 12 6 9 8 12 6 15

WITH ALL YOUR MIND
 4 18 7 19 26 15 15 2 12 6 9 14 18 13 23

AND WITH ALL YOUR
 26 13 23 4 18 7 19 26 15 15 2 12 6 9

STRENGTH
 8 7 9 22 13 20 7 19 (Mark 12:30)

H. Find and read the following passages from the New Testament: **Matthew 22:37** and **Luke 10:27**. How are they similar to the message you completed above?

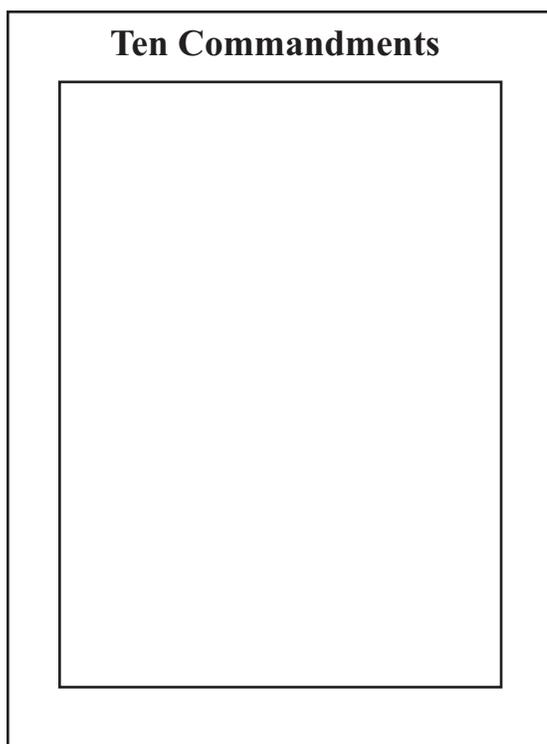
They say we should love God completely.

49

Group: Ten Commandments Poster

Materials: Poster board, markers, pens, note cards

Today I need someone who is willing to write or print each commandment on this poster board, and the rest of us will think of ways we can follow these commandments. Each of us will write one way on a note card and we will tape the cards onto the poster board. Someone might want to draw a picture on the note card instead of writing the words - that is good too. Maybe someone wants to write about something they did this week that shows they are following the commandments.



Craft: Commandments 1-3

Materials: Calligraphy or parchment paper from a craft store if possible or white paper, thin markers or pen, poster board or heavy paper (8 1/2" x 11"), construction paper, glue, scissors, rectangle worksheet.

[Have sample ready to show children.] *Today we are going to write in our nicest handwriting or printing the first three commandments. Before we do that, we are going to make the frame in which we are going to place the commandments.*

[Give each student poster board or heavy construction paper and another piece of construction paper.] *Place the rectangle I am giving you in the center of your poster board and trace around it. Cut along the lines and remove the center of the board. Glue onto the back side of the poster board the construction paper making sure you leave one of the 8 1/2" edges unglued. That is the way you will put your Ten Commandments paper into your frame. Write the words Ten Commandments onto the top or bottom of the frame.*

Now write the first three commandments onto the paper that you will put in the frame. Before you start writing, place the same paper that you used to draw the rectangle for your frame onto the commandment page. Draw around the rectangle again. Now you will know what margins you must follow for your writing.

Closing:

We will close with some psalm verses said by the priest three times with a profound bow during the Divine Liturgy: "I love You, Lord."

Statutes

In vain

Reverence

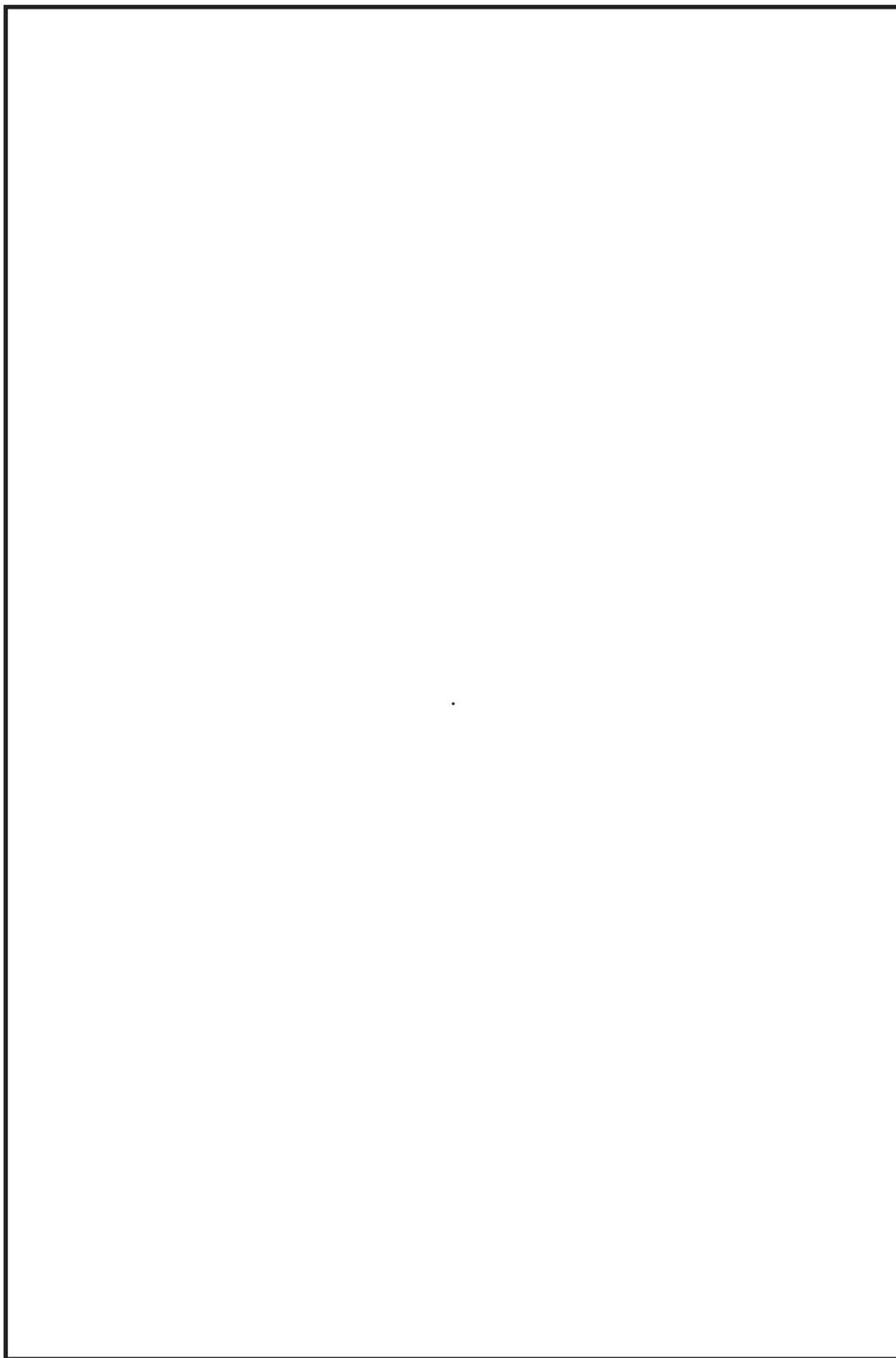
Sabbath

Without reverence. When we say God's name in vain, we are insulting God.

Statutes or precepts are other words for commandments.

The Hebrew name for Saturday, the seventh day of the week. The Israelites kept the Sabbath as their holy day

A feeling of love, respect, and awe.



We Praise You

We praise You, we bless You, we give
thanks to You, O Lord, and we pray
to You, O our God.

Melkite
Greek
Catholic
Church

I shall love You, Lord

I shall love You, Lord, my strength;
the Lord is my fortress,
my refuge and my deliverance.

Melkite
Greek
Catholic
Church

We Praise You

We praise Thee, we bless Thee,
we thank Thee, O Lord, and we pray to Thee,
our God.

Romanian
Greek
Catholic
Diocese of
Canton

I shall love You, Lord

I shall love Thee, O Lord, my strength;
the Lord is my might and my refuge.

Romanian
Greek
Catholic
Diocese of
Canton

We Praise You

We praise You, we bless You, we
thank You, O Lord, and we pray to
You, our God

Ruthenian
Byzantine
Catholic
Metropolitan
Province

I shall love You, Lord

I will love You, O Lord, my strength; the
Lord is my fortress and my refuge.

Ruthenian
Byzantine
Catholic
Metropolitan
Province

We Praise You

We sing of You, we bless You,
we thank You, O Lord, and
we pray to You, our God

Ukrainian
Catholic
Diocese of
St. Josaphat

I shall love You, Lord

I will love You, O Lord, my strength;
the Lord is my firm support and my refuge.

Ukrainian
Catholic
Diocese of
St. Josaphat

We Praise You

We praise You, we bless You,
we give You thanks, Lord,
and we pray to You, our God.

Ukrainian
Catholic
Synod

I shall love You, Lord

I will love You, O Lord, my strength;
the Lord is my stronghold and my refuge.

Ukrainian
Catholic
Synod